

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2007

The Honorable James S. Simpson  
Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Simpson:

We appreciate your interest and assistance on the Dulles Rail project. This is a project of critical importance to Northern Virginia.

As you know, there has been considerable discussion over this project's alignment -- aerial or tunnel -- through the Tysons Corner area of Northern Virginia. Last fall, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the project's sponsor, decided to proceed with an aerial alignment through the Tysons area.

Enclosed is a copy of a recent letter from former U.S. Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman, Jr. that he prepared after a meeting with USDOT and FTA officials. In this letter, Mr. Coleman states his belief that a rail tunnel through Tysons "is clearly the right solution for our community and the future of this region." He then urges the Commonwealth and FTA, and others, to work together in a manner that would enable the FTA to undertake a simultaneous, dual-track review of the aerial and tunnel alignments.

Any such FTA review, of course, would require significant documentation on the tunnel alignment through the Tysons area. We understand that, over the past few months, a private effort has been made to prepare this documentation -- specifically, preliminary engineering and environmental reports -- and that these materials are nearing completion. The tunnel proponents claim the design work they have prepared will meet FTA requirements, thereby allowing the Commonwealth of Virginia to make an "apples-to-apples" comparison between the aerial and tunnel alignments and allowing FTA to determine whether both options would be eligible for federal funding.

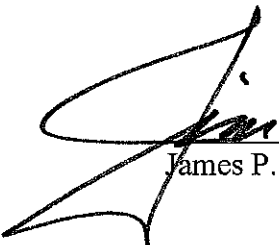
We would appreciate your comments on what would amount to a "dual-track" process that (i) would enable the FTA, initially utilizing these materials, to review and consider the tunnel alignment through Tysons, so that an "apples-to-apples" comparison could be made, based on applicable FTA New Starts criteria, between the project with an aerial alignment through Tysons and with a tunnel alignment, and (ii) would not delay the agency's review of the project as currently proposed by the Commonwealth, or otherwise compromise the project's current review schedule which, we understand, has a full funding grant agreement for the project being executed this fall if the project continues to meet FTA requirements.

We would also appreciate your providing, either as part of or in addition to these comments, a response to the following questions.

1. We understand that the Commonwealth can only submit one alignment for final design approval. Does the FTA, in the New Starts review of the Dulles Rail project, have the authority to independently undertake a simultaneous "dual-track" review of the tunnel and aerial alignments through Tysons Corner?
2. Assuming such authority, what are the major factors the FTA would consider in determining whether to "dual-track" this project at this time, and which such factors, if any, does FTA now believe would or might prevent it from doing so?
3. What are the most significant actions that would need to be undertaken in order to facilitate the agency's review of the tunnel alignment and to enable that review to "catch up" with the agency's review of the aerial alignment?
4. What matters, in addition to those referenced in paragraphs 1-3, would significantly affect an FTA dual-track review of the Dulles Rail tunnel and aerial alignments through Tysons Corner?

We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to receiving a timely response.

Sincerely,

  
James P. Moran  
Tom Davis

cc: The Honorable Tim Kaine